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Emily Stell Hill

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Imagery & Transportation
in
Routine Product Advertising

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**Imagery & Transportation
in
Routine Product Advertising**

By

Emily Stell Hill, B.B.A

Professional Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of the University of Texas at Austin
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of the Requirements
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Dedication

For supporting me through various bouts of uncertainty (not to mention expressing an unrivaled interest in my daily work, studies, research etc.), this report is dedicated to my dear sister and best friend, Caroline. I couldn't do it – it being everything and anything – without you. A million thank you's do not suffice.

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I also must thank my parents for accepting and embracing my various peculiarities, instilling in me a strong moral compass, loving me as only parents can, and, of course, for their generous financial planning, contributions to my education, and grasp of the concept that is “security”. These are gifts for which the value far exceeds a monetary amount.

Thank you, Ryan, for your consummate love and support, and for your positive attitude regarding...everything. Oh - and of course, for sharing with me your love of Microsoft Styles. You’re a lifesaver and a genius, all wrapped into one.

Preface

The author of this report comes from a family of avid readers – of fiction and nonfiction alike. She and her sister spent the better parts of childhood with their noses in their respective books, only to quickly swap once finished in an effort to mitigate the sadness associated with arriving at the conclusion of a wonderful tale. As an adult, she feels fortunate to have remained a book-lover, and can still become so immersed in reading that she loses track of what's going on around her.

In the author's opinion, you're lucky if you've experienced the thrill of being lost in a book or story. It is likewise probable that you have, on some occasion, become "lost" in a movie, or while listening to an engaging or suspenseful story, or through close observation of a visually depicted scene. In her academic studies, she became aware that the phenomenon of being immersed in a story was in fact an idea that had been studied in psychology, and that it also had implications in her particular field of study, advertising, due to implications of persuasive effects. The opportunity to examine a topic of such personal interest and curiosity has been a pleasure, which the author hopes, will be equally informative and interesting to readers.

Abstract

Imagery & Transportation

in

Routine Product Print Advertising

by

Emily Stell Hill, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2010

SUPERVISOR: Lucy Atkinson

In this work, the idea of transportation via advertising is explored, specifically, transportation by means of print advertising. Transportation has been demonstrated to occur when one is observing some form of traditional media and becomes “carried away” by the narrative.

The concept of transportation itself, an explanation of the idea of grotesque, and the manner and extent to which transportation takes place when viewing certain print ads will be analyzed. Transportation is described as one of three styles (modes) of engagement observed in this study, the other two being identity based and what is termed “immersion”.

First, a review of relevant literature on narrative transportation and the use of grotesque imagery (defined below) to facilitate transportation, or at least a more powerful brand experience in high-end print advertising is provided; then the author develops the research question. Next, a series of depth interviews and a survey considers the effects of narrative imagery in drugstore cosmetics print advertising. Findings are discussed, and theoretical explanations are provided. The report concludes with managerial implications and suggestions for future research.

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Chapter 1: Narrative Transportation

In the examination of the exchanges that take place between thought and emotion when an individual experiences a narrative, and further, the impact that narratives may have on an individual's perception of the external world, Richard Gerrig developed the term transportation to describe the phenomenon of being lost in a story (Gerrig, 1993).

Building upon Gerrig's work, and in an effort to determine the *persuasive* effects of stories or narratives, researchers have further developed the theory of transportation. Transportation is defined by Brock and Green as "a convergent process in which the mental systems and capacities of a reader or an observer of a narrative becomes focused on events occurring in the narrative" (Brock and Green, 2005). It has been demonstrated that such cognitive, affective, and imagery involvement in a story can take place in a variety of situations and through various media. This has implications in terms of persuasion, as there is a correlation between the extent to which one is absorbed in a narrative and his or her personal beliefs (both pre-existing and subsequent). Transportation is differentiated from other modes of intellectual processing often examined in research regarding persuasion (Escalas, 2004). In such models of persuasion, including Petty and Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model, intelligent thought and the consideration of arguments and claims in messaging results in attitude change or formation (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Transportation, however, can result in persuasion due to its ability to decrease critical cognitive reactions, practicality of events and powerful

emotional responses (Brock and Green, 2005). In theory, therefore, advertisements resulting in transportation should be viewed with a less critical eye and elicit strong emotional responses. Yet, traditionally, such a response to narrative was not believed to occur via advertisements, as observers recognize them as persuasive attempts and are therefore less susceptible to transportation (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2010).

A 2010 study by McQuarrie and Phillips, however, indicates that transportation can, in fact occur via advertisements when certain criteria are met. In their study, *Narrative and Persuasion in Fashion Advertising*, the authors analyze print advertisements for high-end fashion brands and demonstrate that the viewing of ads can result in transportation “if specific aesthetic properties are present, most notably when grotesque imagery is used” (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2010). The purpose of this report is to extend the work of McQuarrie and Phillips to examine the effectiveness of narrative print advertisements employing *grotesque* imagery for brands involving significantly less consumer involvement and cost than high-end fashion. Specifically, this paper seeks to understand the extent to which grotesque imagery impacts transportation in the more mundane consumption context of drug-store make up, which is applicable to a broader portion of the population than high-end fashion. Attention is focused on transportation via print advertisements employing grotesque imagery, as compared to transportation effects (or lack thereof) experienced through the viewing of traditional print advertisements in which the concept of grotesque is not employed.

Resistance to advertising is becoming an increasingly significant hurdle for advertisers in today's media-saturated environments. Contemporary society is filled with mass-media message, many of which are persuasive in nature (Servin & Tankard Jr., 2001). As a result of the prevalence of persuasive messaging, Phillips and McQuarrie suggest that, at a minimum, ads must be designed to encourage engagement. In the case of print advertising, determining those factors which may successfully "overcome consumer resistance to persuasion", is of great importance to marketers and the like (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2010).

Examining the potential outcomes of narrative-based print advertising as well as specific themes within such ads (in this case a focus on the type of imagery used in the ads), therefore, has significant implications for brand managers.

As explained, narrative transportation has been shown to heighten experiences realized by those individuals engaging it. It is particularly significant that a *high intensity* exposure to a brand tends to result in a beneficial effect for the brand. Indeed, it appears that greater the intensity of the exposure, the more likely it is that a connection with the brand will be established and maintained over time. Interestingly, previous familiarity with a brand is not necessary for a beneficial effect to occur (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2010). This supports the idea that making an effort to expose potential consumers to a brand by creating an intense experience—in this instance (as so in Phillips and McQuarrie's work) through the use of grotesque imagery—designed to transport them into the ad could be a valuable technique, effecting beneficial results for the brand.

Related Research & Terminology

Phillips and McQuarrie argue that particular types of print advertisements are more likely to “foster a more intense brand experience rather than simply to create a positive brand evaluation as in conventional theories of persuasion” (368). That is, rather than simply portraying an attractive image, the ad contains features that arrest the attention of the viewer, causing him or her to have a stronger emotional response and, potentially, make the ad, or brand, more memorable.

In *Narrative and Persuasion in Fashion Advertising*, McQuarrie and Phillips demonstrate that the use of grotesque imagery in high-end fashion ads is beneficial to the brands employing it. Transportation is shown to be more likely to occur via ads using this technique among women for whom fashion is highly important, applicable to their lives, and viewed as an art. Additionally, even for women who did not experience transportation, grotesque imagery associated with such brands was generally seen as favorable, as almost an extension of the high-couture, artistic quality of the fashion world itself.

In order to understand McQuarrie and Phillips’ work, it is necessary that the imagery examined in the study be clearly defined for the reader. In their study, fashion advertisements employing imagery ranging on an aesthetic continuum from what is termed “idealized” to “grotesque” is studied. The authors describe “idealized” advertisements as those in which “everything is pretty, lovely, or luxurious, at least by the standards of twenty-first-century North American mass culture” (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2010). Advertisements described as “grotesque”

in the study feature bizarre imagery and include a “Jimmy Choo ad depicting a woman fishing a purse out of a pool that contains a floating corpse of man, and a Dolce & Gabbana ad that features one beautiful woman in period costume skewering another in the neck” (“Why do grotesque fashion ads lure consumers?”, 2010).

McQuarrie and Phillips studied interviews of 18 women who were active participants in the high-fashion world in order to determine their reactions to fashion ads containing either idealized or grotesque images. As is common in high-fashion advertising, the ads contained only an image and brand name. All ads presented to participants contained the necessary attributes for a narrative, meaning they provided “all the elements needed to construct a plot and develop character” (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2010).

The study’s findings suggest that utilizing imagery that entices consumers to look at and engage in an ad is often more important than whether the image holds positive or negative associations. Ads using idealized imagery were shown to be more easily dismissed, whereas grotesque images caused participants to stop and consider what was “happening” or “would happen”, leading, according to the authors, to “a more intense and enduring experience of the brand” (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2010).

McQuarrie and Phillips’ contribution to the idea of narrative transportation via print advertising, especially the degree to which images themselves can lead to transportation, is notable. However, an extremely small portion of Western

populations purchase the high-end fashion brands examined in *Narrative and Persuasion in Fashion Advertising*. According to a 2008 global Nielsen report, 16% of individuals in North America claim to buy designer brands. However, when examining a breakdown of specific designer brands purchased, it was shown that less than 10% of individuals purchase products from the truly high-end designers (Consumers and Designer Brands, 2008). Prohibitive prices associated with the products offered by such brands limit accessibility. Further, an individual must have both sufficient interest in and knowledge of the fashion world to appreciate the brands featured in the study.

According to a Mintel poll, over 80% of women in America wear some sort of makeup (Sciolino, 2006). Regardless of brand, in comparison to fashion items cosmetics are inexpensive and are available for purchase in more locations. As this product category is widely used and accessible, determining transportation effects the implication of grotesque imagery in advertising will allow for more insight into whether the ideas brought forth by researchers such as McQuarrie and Phillips can be useful for advertisers targeting large segments of the population.

Chapter 2: Research Question and Methodology

Research Question

As explained, the advertisements and their target consumer base described above involve quite specific circumstances (i.e. an interest in, as well as the spending power and willingness to participate in the world of high-fashion). It is therefore worthwhile considering whether grotesque imagery might serve a similar purpose for brands and products catering to broader audiences, such as those characterized by lower price-points, more accessibility, and less involvement (or at a minimum, a weaker association with art and prestige). The central question of interest in this report, therefore, is: *What effect does grotesque imagery have on narrative-based print advertisements for “everyday” products, namely drugstore cosmetics brands?*

Methodology

This report attempts to determine whether advertisements that are visually similar to those used by McQuarrie and Phillips result in similar outcomes when promoting a different sort of brand. As opposed to high-fashion items, drug store cosmetics are widely available for purchase and target a very broad market. While such products are often associated with a higher degree of involvement than, say dishwashing detergent, since they are related to personal appearance, they are not characterized to the same extent as “discretionary”. Further, the cost of such items generally falls under \$20, and they are not typically strongly associated with artistic

quality, couture and significant monetary value, as is often the case when considering high-end fashion pieces.

Traditionally, print advertisements for cosmetics contain an image as well as text describing a featured product or brand. In this study, however, participants were asked to examine ads for widely accessible, relatively low-priced cosmetics, with those aesthetic properties found more commonly in high-end fashion advertising, such as those described above featuring simply an image and brand.

In this study, the researcher showed study participants 8.5x11 inch print advertisements for drug-store quality makeup brands. All of the ads featured images containing elements necessary for narrative transportation and no text other than the brand name. The brands portrayed are available for purchase at all major drug and grocery stores and generally have comparable price points and perceptions of value. The goal was to show female participants – the most frequent purchasers of make up and magazines containing makeup ads – ads for makeup to find out how they experience them.

Participants were recruited online and by word of mouth. As women are the most common purchasers of cosmetics, all participants were female and ranged in age from 26 to 34 years. Moderate cosmetics usage (defined as at least several times per week) was a prerequisite for participation in the study. Participants are described in **Error! Reference source not found.**

TABLE 1: STUDY PARTICIPANTS

DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS		
Name	Age	Occupation
Ashley	28	Finance
Amy	27	Administrative Assistant
Brittany	34	Salesperson
Lauren	29	Account Representative
Mary	26	Student
Liza	26	Finance

Note: Participant names have been changed to ensure confidentiality

At the beginning of the interview, participants were asked to discuss their views regarding cosmetics. They described their personal philosophies regarding the use of cosmetics/make up including when, where and why they wear it. Participants also discussed what brands they prefer, where and when they purchase cosmetics, and what, as a general rule, is their motivation for the purchase of particular items. Next, the participants were shown a set of print advertisements for drug-store cosmetics brands. They were asked to freely discuss the impressions they got from the ads in any manner and order they desired. If a participant felt no inclination to closely examine or comment upon a particular ad, the interviewer interjected only to draw attention to it (i.e. “what about this one?”). Beyond this, there was no prodding by the interviewer, in an effort to maintain a scenario as similar as possible to the manner by which participants would browse a magazine.

TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIONS OF ADVERTISEMENTS

DESCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW ADS	
Brand	Description
<i>Ads with idealized imagery</i>	
L'Oreal	Pretty blonde girl smiles, walks beside attractive man in suit
Revlon	Attractive woman sits on steps outside building, enjoying coffee
Max Factor	Well-dressed girl, on the phone, surrounded by colorful polka dots
<i>Ads with grotesque imagery</i>	
Maybelline	Brutal, dark scene; nude model clings to man, another man shot, apparently dead
L'Oreal	Tough-looking model; walking away from explosion
Rimmel	Thin model stands beside pool; drowned man floating in pool

A total of six ads were shown to participants, three of which contained grotesque imagery and three portraying idealized imagery. The ads are described in Table 2, and are included at the end of this report as figures (numbers 2 through 7). Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was videotaped for further analysis.

Chapter 3: Discussion of Results

The interview transcriptions were examined and coded by the author in an effort to recognize the differing manners by which the ads were engaged, interpreted and received.

As previously mentioned, most cosmetics ads contain an image, brand name and text explaining product features and benefits. In an ad featuring such elements, the processing of the message can be explained relatively easily by “traditional” theories of communication and information processing theories. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), a theoretical model of persuasion developed by Petty and Cacioppo (Severin and Tankard Jr., 2001), is frequently used to account for the way in which such a message is processed. According to the ELM, there are two cognitive paths by which an individual may process information and subsequently experience a change in attitude: the central route and the peripheral route (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). When information is processed via the central route, the engaged individual chooses to pay attention to the message and considers the claims or arguments made, leading to a decision to act (or not act) or change in attitude regarding the product. Processing via the peripheral route occurs when an individual does not centrally process the information presented in an ad, and “is guided more by peripheral cues” (Severin and Tankard Jr., 2001). The extent to which elaboration, or cognitive work, occurs when viewing and considering a message depends on whether it is processed centrally or peripherally. The more involved an individual is in inspecting the claims in a message, the higher their

elaboration. A person processing a message is involved in high elaboration when processing centrally, and involved in low elaboration when processing peripherally (Severin and Tankard Jr., 2001). ELM focuses on the extent to which an individual chooses to elaborate (think about) a message but does not distinguish between different modes of engagement/involvement. Correspondingly, it does not account for impact differences in the message source, content or context might have on the manner by which a viewer engages in an ad, leading McQuarrie and Phillips to conclude that, “the elaboration likelihood model proved incomplete as an account of the possible routes to persuasion” (371). The researchers suggest that there are numerous ways in which consumers engage ads, and that there are associated implications of such varied engagement in terms of underlying factors in persuasion. As the ads featured in both this and McQuarrie and Phillips’ studies do not contain a product description, aesthetic theory is required to sufficiently explain the manner by which they may be engaged.

In *Narrative and Persuasion in Fashion Advertising*, McQuarrie and Phillips recognize five modes of engagement occurring in the observation of fashion ads, asserting that differences in used imagery (i.e. grotesque vs. idealized) directly impact the manner and degree to which an individual engages in an ad. The five identified modes in which consumers engage ads are to: act, identify, feel, transport or immerse. These modes are depicted visually in Figure 1.

The first three modes of engagement (engage to act, engage for identity, and engage to feel) were previously known. When a woman engages to act, she views an

ad solely as an opportunity to consider merchandise. Essentially all elements of the advertisement are ignored, except the featured product. Engaging for identity aligns with typical magazine advertisements centering on beautification products. Women who engage for identity are drawn to advertisements portraying character and images with which they relate, or would like to mimic. They often focus on increasing confidence, and express interest in whether the product or brand advertised might help facilitate such feelings in their lives. Engaging to feel involves mood and emotion. Women who engage to feel view ads in an effort to experience certain feelings, generally positive in nature.

The two new modes of engagement identified by McQuarrie and Phillips include engage to transport and engage to immerse. Engaging to transport involves the creation of a story line based on the visual elements of an ad. Immersion, on the other hand, involves considering the aesthetic of an image, but without the development or creation of an associated narrative, meaning transportation does not occur.

The study described here identified three of the five aforementioned modes of engagement in the interview analysis pertaining to cosmetics ads, and subsequently integrated additional theoretical support and interpretation of these modes in order to bolster explanations afforded by the data. The three modes evident in this study include: engage for identity, engage to transport and engage to immerse (depicted in red in Figure 1).

Perception of Grotesque Advertisements:

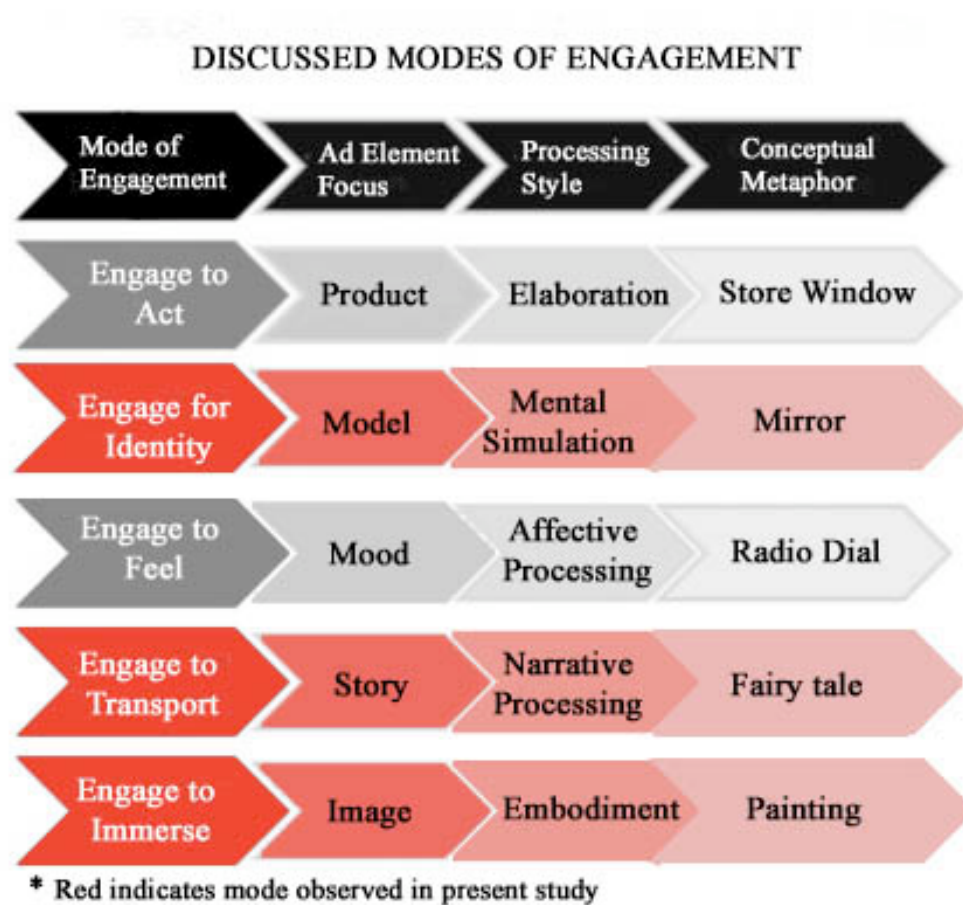
(Maybelline, L'Oreal & Rimmel)

Interpretations of ads making use of the grotesque vary greatly by person, but generally align with typical reactions stemming from an individual's particular mode of engagement. Those women who engage for identity appear, as a general rule, to find grotesque imagery less likeable. Women who engage for identity are attracted to ads depicting colors, models and settings to which they relate, hope to mimic or experience. Correspondingly, it makes sense that the darker, bizarre scenes depicted in grotesque ads might be less pleasing to these women, as such imagery does not generally align with Western perceptions of beauty. In discussing the L'Oreal ad involving grotesque imagery Abby explains:

This doesn't appeal to me. I'm not a "bad girl" She looks tough. That's not me. I would just turn the page.

Of course, some women do aspire to be tough, and might associate the grotesque L'Oreal image with independence and female empowerment. In the case of Abby however, her inability to relate to the character depicted resulted in her engaging in the ad only long enough to answer the interviewer's questions about

FIGURE 1: ENGAGEMENT



Source: Original chart by McQuarrie & Phillips, updated by the author

it. It appears that for women who engage for identity, a dislike or inability to relate to grotesque images can translate into a fundamental reduction in engagement itself. Ads that such women found unattractive and/or difficult to identify with were observed for briefer periods of time than their idealized counterparts. Brittany, who also engages for identity, expresses strong dislike of grotesque imagery:

I wouldn't even stop to look at any of this (gesturing towards Maybelline ad). Or this (speaking about grotesque L'Oreal ad). They are dark, creepy and completely unappealing to me. I would prefer you take them away, actually.

As shown by McQuarrie and Phillips, some women are not repelled by grotesque imagery, and in fact appear to be more drawn to it due to its unexpected nature and visual complexity. Liza clearly engages in transportation when viewing the ads. This mode involves significant attention towards the narrative elements suggested in an image. Women who engage to transport are drawn into ads displaying interesting details and unclear plots in which they can contemplate what is occurring. She spent considerable time looking at each, picking them up and absorbing details and developing explanations for what might be going on in them. The ads featuring grotesque imagery seemed to catch her eye more quickly than the idealized images, corresponding with McQuarrie and Phillips' study in which it is noted that, "women were most likely to engage in the ad's narrative and be transported when an ad contained elements of the grotesque" (389). After examining the grotesque Rimmel ad, Liza comments:

I wanna know how she killed this guy. Maybe she was in the pool killing him, and then got out, and that's how she got raccoon eyes.

Of the L'Oreal ad employing grotesque imagery, Liza says:

Oh wow, that's funny. (Long pause while examining.) I mean, this is probably the ad I like the most. It's like an action movie. I think it's cool. The visual is really compelling. There is something exploding in it. It makes you wonder what happened. Like, was that *her* car? Or, maybe she blew it up.

Liza spent several minutes examining the Maybelline ad, the darkest of the grotesque ads, before commenting:

Hm...this is kind of scary. It seems like they're trying to be pretentious. I would definitely stop and look at this, and try to figure out what is going on. What happened to result in his being shot? Who's that guy going to stab? And what is she doing over there? Maybe they were fighting over her. But I don't know, I don't really like it. It seems like they're trying too hard for selling makeup.

The second 'new' engagement mode identified by McQuarrie and Phillips is "engage to immerse". The researchers found that some women engaging in fashion advertising containing the grotesque did not become transported by the imagery, but rather, became "immersed in an image....as if the ads were on display in an art

gallery” (387). Rather than forming a story around depictions and actors in the image, women engaging to immerse are interested in unique or suggestive depictions. According to McQuarrie and Phillips, they are inclined to focus “in part on the visual aesthetic elements of the photographic image: line, color, shape, and configuration” (387). Ashley engages to immerse when viewing ads for makeup. Unlike Liza, she does not create stories around the images, but instead takes note of their artistic quality, not just the components of them, but also their spacing. In reference to the grotesque Rimmel ad she says:

I like this. It exudes luxury, and high class. I love the simplicity; just the simplicity and the clean lines. It aligns with my makeup style. It’s straightforward. She looks kind of cool. She’s got a cool suit on and the gold color, the gold insinuates the luxury feeling. I’m not distracted by this image; it’s laid out well.

When considering the grotesque L’Oreal ad, she explains:

This ad is edgy. I don’t know how I feel about the car blowing up in the background. But she looks good. Yeah, her makeup looks really nice. They did a good job.

Like Ashley, Laura engages to immerse. Her attention is drawn to images based almost entirely on the colors portrayed in the ads, and she displays little interest in the subjects themselves, but rather on whether she “enjoys” the elements. In her discussion of the grotesque Rimmel ad, Laura says:

I like this one, too. The gold catches my attention. It is just a simple image, and I like that. And the gold suit. I just really like that.

Perception of Idealized Advertisements:

(L’Oreal, Max Factor, Revlon)

Women who engage for identity are seeking images to which they can somehow relate, which aligns with prior consumer research, suggesting that subjects examine ads and consider the extent to which they identify with it, or the actors in it (Richins, 1991). As early as 1954, it was recognized that individuals examine images in an effort to evaluate themselves, and in the process make comparisons between themselves and those portrayed in idealized images (Festinger, 1954). Additional research conducted as an extension of Festinger’s work suggests that such social comparisons are motivated by numerous factors, including self-enhancement, which is significant in the consideration of advertisements for cosmetics (Suls and Wheeler, 2002). While women who engage in ads in this manner do notice the images and aesthetic qualities present in the ads, as described by McQuarrie and Phillips, “the primary focus in this mode is the

appearance and the possible personality characteristics of *the model(s)* portrayed in the image.”

While grotesque imagery appears less likely to be appealing to those individuals who engage for identity, this does not mean that idealized imagery is necessarily the key for advertisers wishing to reach them. Definitions of beauty, attractiveness and desirability are not universal. Even in terms of “traditional Western” perceptions of beauty referenced previously, there are shades of gray. A woman may be obviously attractive, but her particular “look”, whether it be her coloring, choice of clothing, or the environment she is in, may render her more or less attractive to a particular individual, depending on personal differences and preferences. Mary, who engages for identity, describes her interpretation of the L’Oreal ad employing idealized imagery, and the extent to which she *does not* relate to this particular model:

This one looks fresh, pretty and bright. She looks really youthful. But being blonde and fresh-faced, I don’t feel like that, I mean, I’m not.

Mary admits that she looks at ads and considers the attractiveness of models in an effort to determine what “people” think is beautiful:

When I see this kind of stuff, however vain or subjective it sounds, I always look to see how pretty the girls are. I feel like I always look at

other girls, just, not like judging or anything, but just to see what is considered pretty, and whether I agree. I think the way guys look at girls is different from the way girls look at girls...comparing in a way. Everyone is made differently, I know, but I try to observe everything, and then do my own thing with it.

Mary displays tendencies of self-monitoring (Fisk and Taylor, 1991), meaning she pays attention to norms suggesting the “correct” way to present oneself. However, her comment regarding doing her “own thing” with perceptions of trends suggests an air of independence. Bolstering this idea, Mary finds some of the advertisements do feature women more in line with her idea of beauty. She spends more time looking at these ads, whereas the ads she did not relate to were cast aside fairly quickly. When discussing the idealized Revlon ad she says:

She looks like she’s waiting for people to pick her up or meet her. She seems more interesting, she seems content by herself, confident and independent. The words “strongly feminine” come to mind. I most associate with this one, I think it seems most believable. I can imagine being her.

Like Mary, Abby finds those ads which feature idealized imagery portraying an image she would like to convey appealing and she finds those with darker,

grotesque imagery that are out of alignment with her idea of attractiveness less appealing. In reference to the Max Factor ad she says:

I am definitely drawn to this; I like what she's wearing. I would wear this. The bright colors catch my eye. She looks really good. I would like to look like this.

Brittany expresses similar viewpoints. She indicated a strong dislike of grotesque imagery and looked at, and subsequently commented on, only idealized ads. She focused mostly on the idealized L'Oreal ad, to which she most relates:

I like this. This is my favorite. *This* is what I want to look at (As opposed to the grotesque images). She just looks fresh and pretty. This is how I would like to appear. Just, you know, attractive, happy and put-together.

When engaging for identity, women's cognitive activity extends beyond simply processing an image either peripherally or centrally as described by the elaboration likelihood model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). Rather, according to McQuarrie and Phillips, this mode of engagement involves mental simulation. As its name suggests, when mentally simulating, an individual creates or imagines a situation or plot in which he or she plays the main role (Escalas, 2004). While this

activity may sound similar to narrative transportation as defined by Green and Brock (2000), it differs from it in that complete immersion in the story “told” by the advertisement is not occurring, but rather, the participant is imagining a scene involving herself and manipulating it to suit her desires (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2010).

Also of importance is the idea that women who engage with ads in this manner will not do so with every ad. In line with Mary and Abby’s comments above, and their respective refusal as noted previously, to engage in those ads to which they did not relate or aspire to mimic (“I would just turn the page”), “engagement will only occur when the ad’s models, brands, and situations are deemed glimpses of a way to achieve a possible as well as desired ideal self” (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2010).

Certain kinds of images, when viewed, prompt women to become involved with the story they suggest. There is a marked difference between women who engage to transport into the story suggested by an ad, and those women who simply engage with an ad for identity. The former are focused primarily on the story they’re creating, which doesn’t necessarily involve identifying with any particular character. The latter, on the other hand, are focused on finding an ideal with whom they can identify when viewing an ad (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2010). In a sense, those women who engage to transport, enter into a story of their own making based on their personal response to the image. The development of such a story involves what is termed narrative processing, which, in fact, creates in emotional

“interpretations” of ad that is viewed (Markus and Kunda, 1986). In the case of idealized imagery in ads, however, transportation often results in a “story line” centering around a photo shoot, or the process of making the ad, because the visual is simple and stereotypical in terms of aesthetic (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2010). Such stories provide little personal meaning, however, and seem less likely to lead to extended engagement. As she engages to transport, it is not surprising that Liza conveys these types of feelings when discussing the idealized L’Oreal ad:

I don’t know, this just looks like a Mentos commercial. It just looks silly and posed.

According to transportation theory, the recognition of any text as an attempt at persuasion inhibits transportation (Brock and Green, 2005). Thus, in the case of Liza, while she may enjoy looking at some idealized ads, she is not likely to be transported by them.

Ashley, who engages to immerse and focused mostly on colors and visual spacing in the grotesque ads, likewise notices the colors used in idealized ads. Ashley pays a great deal of attention to the layout and feelings she gets from the aesthetic of an ad, and, in general, the extent to which she is drawn to an ad appears to be a direct reflection of how appealing she finds the visual, regardless of whether imagery is grotesque or idealized. She finds the idealized Revlon ad appealing due to the colors used in it (It is interesting to note, however, that she also expresses a

desire to “be like” the model portrayed in this instance, suggesting that she also, at times, engages for identity):

I do like this ad. I like it because the color scheme is very appealing to me. And she...she’s kind of inspirational, I guess. She doesn’t look like other girls in ads; I kind of want to be her.

She explains that she dislikes the idealized Max Factor ad purely out of feeling ‘visually attacked’ by it:

I do not like this. The colors are too...distracting to me. This would not make me stop in a magazine. It’s too much of an assault for me.

Ashley also ignores ads employing overly familiar imagery and thus not encouraging engagement for her, as demonstrated in her comments regarding the idealized L’Oreal ad. Her responses, again, suggest that she engages to immerse, but also, perhaps secondarily or circumstantially, for identity:

This just looks like a stereotypical ad. She’s pretty, but she looks kind of spacey, so I don’t want to relate to her.

Like Ashley, Laura continues to notice colors, lighting and visual elements in ads, regardless of imagery category. She expresses her enjoyment of both the idealized L'Oreal and Max Factor ads:

I'm drawn to this one (idealized L'Oreal ad), because I like the light airy colors. I just love the bright colors; this is very fresh and clean-looking. Color is really important to me. I always like bright ads. And I love the polka dots in this one (pointing towards the idealized Max Factor ad). It's an interesting visual, the way they are scattered around the page.

Chapter 4: Summary of Findings

Of the five modes of engagement identified by McQuarrie and Phillips in *Narrative and Persuasion in Fashion Advertising*, three were observed as occurring in this study. These three perceived modes were *Engage for Identity*, *Engage to Transport* and *Engage to Immerse*.

It is not surprising that no participants engaged to act in this particular study. When an individual engages to act, she views ads as if she were perusing a list of available products to purchase, paying little or no attention to the context. The ads used did not contain product descriptions directing viewers to act. Rather, the ads were designed to showcase overall “looks” that might be influenced by the use of make up (all models in the ads were wearing make up, but specific products, such as lipstick or mascara were not highlighted), and scenes and imagery designed for branding purposes as opposed to product promotion. There was, therefore, little upon which anyone *could* act.

There also were no participants in this study who engaged to feel. This mode of engagement involves viewing ads “primarily to regulate mood or to obtain a desired emotional response” (McQuarrie & Phillips, 2010). As such, the reason for the absence of this mode could be attributed either to the inability of any of the utilized ads to create a desired feeling in participants, or simply to the fact that those individuals surveyed do not used ads for this purpose.

For women who engage for identity, emphasis is placed on the images and identities portrayed in an ad, especially personality traits of models, as opposed to

brands or products. Determining whether the identity she observes is one which she (a) relates to or, (b) would like to imitate (usually in an effort to gain confidence), dictates the extent to which a woman focuses on (and expresses a liking for) an advertisement. According to McQuarrie and Phillips, women engaging to immerse are practicing what is termed “mental stimulation”, which is akin to imagining oneself in a particular scenario (383-384). Mental stimulation in this sense is not the same as transportation in that the “story” imagined focuses solely on the individual looking at the ads, and not the world conveyed by cues presented in the image. As a result, immersion occurs only in ads to which a woman relates.

When a woman (or any individual) engages in transportation, she is creating a story. Research has shown that information that is processed in this manner is better understood and more easily recalled (Mandler and Goodman, 1982). Therefore, in the case of women who engage to transport, the effective print ad allows the viewer an opportunity to connect with a brand by creating her own story. As presenting information in story form can influence certain customers’ emotions and attitudes, and “the route to persuasion is an intensification of brand experience” (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2010), the decision to use imagery shown to be more likely to result in transportation is an important consideration in the promotion of one’s brand or products.

While narrative product ads (and desired resulting transportation) can provide many benefits to the brands advertised by strengthening consumers’ perceived connection to, and subsequent attitude about them, transportation does

not necessarily occur as a result of all narrative imagery. Likewise, it appears that while transportation was shown to be more likely to occur via ads employing grotesque in McQuarrie and Phillips' research, and that the resulting transportation elicited positive associations with the advertised brands, this may not always be the case when advertising for other product categories. Consider, for example, the case of the grotesque Maybelline ad, the darkest of those used in this study. Most participants expressed feelings of distaste for the ad. While viewing it did result in transportation for Liza, she still didn't like the ad, and she felt that it didn't align with the products offered by the brand (cosmetics). Similarly, Ashley called the ad "too avant-garde", and suggested that while it was "the most visually interesting", it was "too dark" and "trying too hard for makeup", repeating almost verbatim Liza's comment that, "it seems like they're trying too hard for selling makeup." This may suggest that, with regard to products which involve lower levels of involvement and significantly lower price points than high-end fashion items, a fine line exists between images that are grotesque and subsequently engaging, and those that are deemed "too" grotesque, and are subsequently dismissed. In other words, for products not associated with culture, art and couture, ads attempting to evoke feelings often associated with such ideas, may come across as simply excessive and inconsistent with the brand(s) being advertised. If perceived inconsistencies or levels of dislike are so strong that an ad is essentially ignored, it is obviously rendered ineffective.

If, however, an ad employing grotesque is perceived to be unappealing but not to the extent that the woman viewing it chooses to ignore it altogether, and especially if it entices the woman to become immersed in it, the desired effect of the ad may still be realized. In an experiment by Robert Zajonc, it was shown that “mere exposure of an individual to a stimulus object enhances his (or her) attitude toward it” (Zajonc, 1968). As advertising involves repeated communication, this suggests that regardless of the tone conveyed in a message, (i.e. grotesque or idealized), developing positive attitudes is possible.

According to transportation theory, the recognition of any text as an attempt at persuasion inhibits transportation (Brock and Green, 2005). Thus, in the case of Liza, while she may enjoy looking at some idealized ads, she is not likely to be transported by them. In such an instance, since transportation results in powerful brand experiences, the use of grotesque is absolutely beneficial. For Liza, it could also be argued that regardless of her feelings toward the dark, grotesque Maybelline ad, the fact that it *did* result in her being transported is sufficient in terms of desired brand experience. Positive or negative feelings aside, after being transported by an image, she is not likely to forget it. Supporting this idea further are the results of an attitude change study conducted by Tanenbaum and Gengle (1966), in which attitudes changed only in a positive direction, “although both a positive as well as a negative manipulation were employed” (cited in Zajonc, 1968).

In this report, this single occurrence of *any* apparent mode of elaboration with the Maybelline ad, however, suggests that this particular image may be too

dark to appeal to any significant population in terms of the product category being considered. It is possible that this image, in this context, is difficult for many women to understand.

Research suggests that the perception of beauty is, in part, a reflection of both an individuals' perception of a visual subject as well as his/her ability to understand the image, meaning emotional responses to any image can vary greatly by individual. According to the cognitive fluency hypothesis, "the fluency of high-level operations concerned with the processing of an artwork is affectively marked and influences aesthetic evaluation of the artwork" (Belke and Carbon, 2003). The extent to which an individual is able to appreciate an image, therefore, is directly related to the ease with which he/she can interpret it. This suggests that, in the consideration of advertisements absent of descriptive words, the ability of women to interpret and derive meaning from them will differ according to the particularities associated with their high-order processing. It has been found that when an individual understands an image, he/she will experience a "more favorable aesthetic application" (Belke and Carbon, 2003). Ultimately, the degree to which an individual comprehends a piece of artwork correlates positively with emotional response. If understanding the Maybelline (or any other) image was perceived as difficult, it is reasonable to suggest, then, that emotional response to it would be low.

In regard to women who engage to immerse, a conclusion similar to that regarding transportation can be drawn. In order to react to an ad in this way (immersion), a woman must devote significant attention to it, and, as a result, her

experience with the brand portrayed is extended and intensified. Affective responses to visual art have been linked to emotion-inducing cognitive processes (Silvia, 2005). This provides support for McQuarrie & Phillips' assertion that women who view fashion imagery in the context of "artwork" (namely through immersion) are likely to feel strong emotional responses as a result, and subsequently, more powerful brand experiences. Further, as women engaging in immersion are viewing advertisements as if they were pieces of art, the findings of Belke and Carbon as discussed above, are especially relevant. They suggest that women who become immersed in an ad are likely to experience a positive affective response, as immersion is more common in images that a woman understands, relates to, and appreciates.

The only participant in this study who engaged to transport, Liza, experienced transportation only when viewing ads employing the grotesque, indicating that, as suggested by McQuarrie and Phillips, grotesque imagery facilitates transportation more effectively than its idealized counterparts. Immersion, as described originally by McQuarrie and Phillips, can be powerful tool in terms of persuasion, much in the same manner as transportation. However, unlike the results of McQuarrie and Phillips' study, the grotesque did not result in immersion any more so than idealized depictions. Rather, there was a 50-50 split between the number of occurrences of immersion via grotesque ads and idealized ads, indicating that the visual elements resulting in immersion cannot be directly attributed to either category. Finally in the makeup category examined in this

report, the grotesque actually repelled those study participants who engage for identity.

While Liza was more drawn to grotesque imagery, she also examined the idealized ads (though with less involvement), and even commented that she “liked” the idealized Max Factor ad. Most importantly, she was not so disinterested in them (or repelled) that she would have, figuratively, “turned the page” upon seeing them.

In sum, for advertisements promoting makeup/cosmetics, idealized imagery appears to be the option most likely to engage the largest number of people/broadest target, as it did not “turn off” any participants, and seemed to “work” in some capacity for all of them. However, not all idealized images were necessarily successful, even for individuals who engage for identity. Because viewers who engage in this mode are compelled by ads to which they relate, personal preferences, attitudes and desires impact the extent to which identity occurs. Of the idealized images used in this study, the Revlon and Max Factor ads were most frequently described as portraying images or ideals that participants would most like to mimic. Even Ashley, who displayed strong tendencies to engage to immerse, demonstrated an inclination to engage for identity when viewing the idealized Revlon ad by commenting that she would like to appear as the model in the ad. These two ads appear different from the idealized L’Oreal ad in that they were perceived as less “stereotypical”, and more in line with viewers’ impressions of themselves or the ways they would like to be perceived. This provides support for the idea that images that differ from traditional cosmetics ad imagery might be more

compelling to viewers, and provide advertisers with a way to encourage them to look twice, or longer, without the use of the grotesque.

Chapter 5: Limitations and Future Research

The sample size used for this report was relatively small (six women), and the age range of participants did not exceed 10 years. Additionally, the ads used in the development of this report were fictitious, meaning there could be some question as to whether responses were as accurate as they could be.

The product/brand domain examined in this report (makeup), while appealing to a broader audience than high-end fashion, still incorporates individual feelings and emotions regarding personal appearance into decision-making. As such, one task for future researcher might be to consider products that can truly be described as “hum-drum”, such as dish soap. This sort of product has little if any reflection on the “self”, and is purchased to accomplish a task (to get the dishes clean). It is interesting to consider whether products that do not involve personal appearance in any manner (both fashion and makeup do) would be impacted by the grotesque. While this idea should be examined, the researcher anticipates that, as appears the case even with makeup, extreme images will be perceived as “not aligning” with such brands and products.

Due to the implications in terms of persuasion when considering transportation, it would also be worthwhile to examine what tactics/visual components there are, other than the grotesque that could increase the likelihood of transportation.

Also of interest is the context in which ads used in this and past studies were viewed. While participants were asked to view ads in the same manner in which

they observe them in magazines, they were not, in fact, browsing through periodicals, reading articles, and viewing numerous ads for varying products. While obtaining sufficient resources might prove difficult, actually inserting ads into a magazine and conducting a study relating to recall and transportation would provided further information.

Finally, one wonders whether gender might play a role in preferred modes of engagement. It would be interesting to study whether men engage via the same modes, and if so, in what contexts.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

As per Petty and Cacioppo, messages that are deliberately thought about (elaborated via the central route), and therefore utilize more cognitive resources, are more likely to result in attitude change (1986). Transportation into a narrative world has been shown by Brock and Green to have strong implications in terms of persuasion that extend beyond traditionally conceived engagement/persuasion outcomes (2005). In conjunction with McQuarrie and Phillips, it appears that transportation can occur via print ads, and that engaging an ad via transportation *or* immersion, can result in more powerful brand experiences (2010). Therefore, it was important to consider not only what sort of images increase the likelihood of transportation or immersion, but also the impact of product category on this likelihood.

The author built upon the work of McQuarrie and Phillips in which the impact of aesthetic differences on transportation (and other modes of engagement) as a response to fashion advertising was examined, and extended their idea to a broader product category. An interview methodology was used to expand upon the idea of transportation via print advertising and to consider the outcomes that result from the use of various imagery.

It was determined that the grotesque, while useful for facilitating transportation, did not have the same effect for cosmetics ads as it did for fashion. Perhaps due to the highly personal nature of cosmetics, coupled with its relatively low price point, the grotesque is less useful than it is for high fashion products

which are likewise highly personal, but also associated with art, and possess drastically higher prices. Essentially, there seemed to be some disconnect with the grotesque images shown and the participants' current associations with the advertised brands as well as their ideas of beauty. As cosmetics are designed to enhance (or even create) beauty, most participants expressed that grotesque imagery is not what they hope to think of when deciding which cosmetics to use or purchase. Most importantly, this disconnect resulted in, essentially, alienating a majority of participants from those ads featuring grotesque imagery.

While the intensity of brand experience has been linked to the particular mode of engagement experienced by an individual viewing an advertisement, in this study only half of the participants engaged in either transportation or immersion. The other half engaged for identity when viewing cosmetics ads, further indicating that idealized imagery may be best suited to this product category.

A caveat of this idea, however, was discussed, namely that identification with, or perceived 'relatability' to, a particular image is quite varied by individual. The use of a pretty girl in an appealing setting may not cause anyone to simply turn the page or recoil in disgust, as one runs the risk of doing when using the grotesque, but it also may come across as "empty" or "stereotypical", thus inhibiting extensive (central) cognitive elaboration. As a result, it is recommended that images for advertisements of this nature be chosen based on their ability to be simultaneously visually intriguing and appealing, though this is no small task.

FIGURE 2: REVLON AD (IDEALIZED)

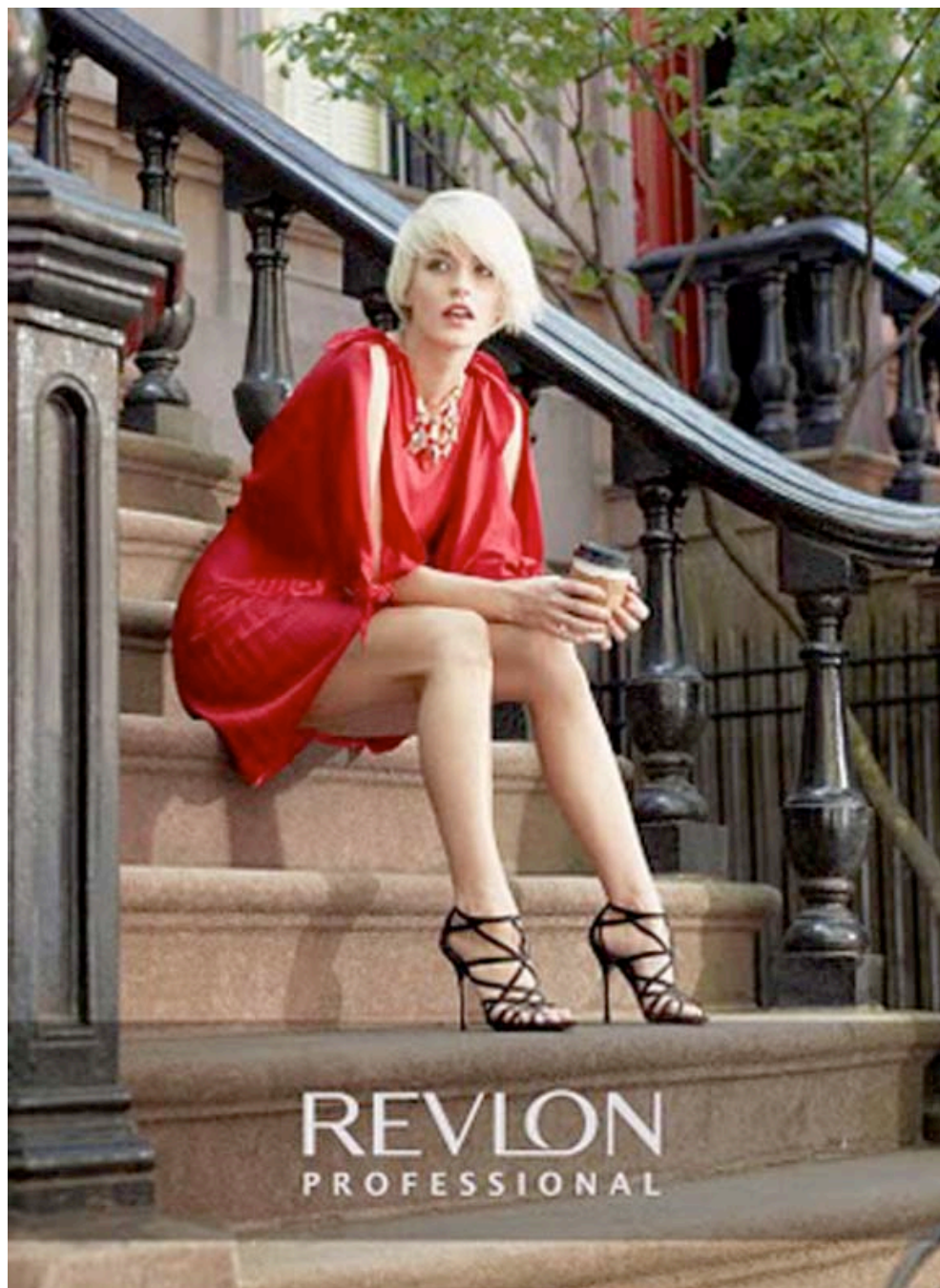


FIGURE 3: MAYBELLINE AD (GROTESQUE)



FIGURE 4: RIMMEL AD (GROTESQUE)

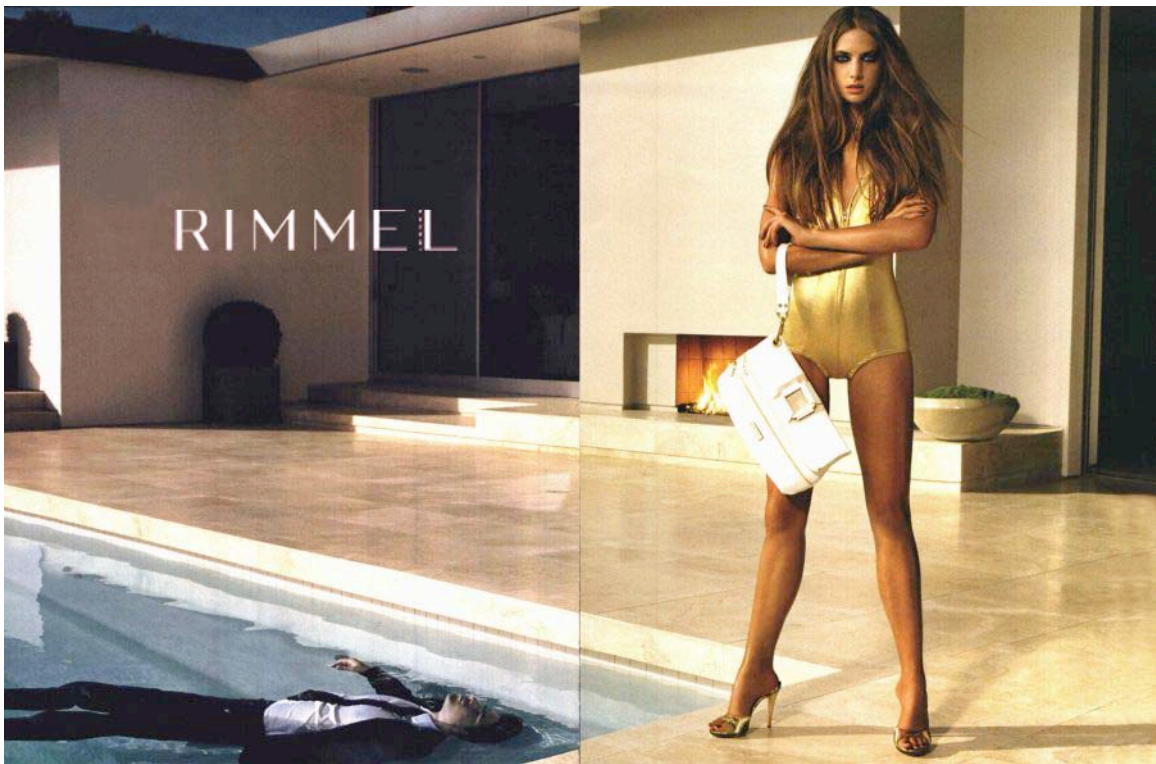


FIGURE 5: L'OREAL AD (GROTESQUE)



FIGURE 6: MAX FACTOR AD (IDEALIZED)



FIGURE 7: L'OREAL AD (IDEALIZED)



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VITA

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